

PM: Use Turkey as gateway for trade

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PUTRAJAYA: The private sector has been urged to make Turkey the gateway into the markets of European Union countries, West Asia and Central Asia.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said they should take advantage of Turkey's unique and strategic position of lying between the Asian and European continents.

He also invited companies from Turkey to use Malaysia as a base to enter the huge Asian market and to tap the opportunities provided by the Asean Free Trade Area.

"By being based in Malaysia, they can expand and seize the opportunities not only in the Asean market but also the world's largest market, that is China," Bernama quoted him as saying at a dinner here last night in honour of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who arrived on a three-day visit here yesterday.

Erdogan's delegation includes three ministers, nine members of parliament and 107 businessmen.

Dr Mahathir also suggested that positive measures be taken to reactivate the Malaysia-Turkey Business Chamber and Economic and Trade Joint Commission, which had not been very active for some time.

He said bilateral trade in 2002 amounted to US\$270mil (RM1.026bil), with exports from Malaysia totalling US\$211mil (RM801.8mil).

The two leaders also held a meeting at the Prime Minister's Department this afternoon.

Briefing reporters on the meeting, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said both leaders were very satisfied with the outcome of the meeting, which touched on areas such as politics, trade and investment, energy, water management, sanitation and sewage management and tourism.

The meeting also resulted in the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two countries on bilateral co-operation in the energy and water sectors.

The MoU, signed by Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and Turkish Transportation Minister Binali Yildirim, would enable Malaysia's businessmen to undertake feasibility studies in the areas in Turkey.

"Dr Mahathir emphasised Malaysia's interest in taking part in various privatisation projects in Turkey and he was told there is no restriction for our businessmen to venture into such projects in Turkey," Syed Hamid said.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia was also keen to sell more palm oil to Turkey and had agreed to provide credit arrangement for the purpose.

On international issues, particularly the crisis in Palestine and Iraq, he said both leaders shared the same views.